JPRS L/8909

7 February 1980

Worldwide Report

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

(FOUO 1/80)

FBIS FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

APPROVED FOR RELEASE: 2007/02/08: CIA-RDP82-00850R000200050011-2

NOTE

JPRS publications contain information primarily from foreign newspapers, periodicals and books, but also from news agency transmissions and broadcasts. Materials from foreign-language sources are translated; those from English-language sources are transcribed or reprinted, with the original phrasing and other characteristics retained.

Headlines, editorial reports, and material enclosed in brackets [] are supplied by JPRS. Processing indicators such as [Text] or [Excerpt] in the first line of each item, or following the last line of a brief, indicate how the original information was processed. Where no processing indicator is given, the information was summarized or extracted.

Unfamiliar names rendered phonetically or transliterated are enclosed in parentheses. Words or names preceded by a question mark and enclosed in parentheses were not clear in the original but have been supplied as appropriate in context. Other unattributed parenthetical notes within the body of an item originate with the source. Times within items are as given by source.

The contents of this publication in no way represent the policies, views or attitudes of the U.S. Government.

For further information on report content call (703) 351-2811.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE: 2007/02/08: CIA-RDP82-00850R000200050011-2

JPRS L/8909

7 February 1980

WORLDWIDE REPORT

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

(FOUO 1/80)

CONTENTS

INTER-AFRICAN AFFAIRS

FRENCH ROLE IN SAHEL REPORTED

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 pp 3314-3316

[Text] In the course of a press conference given on 21 November on the eve of his departure for an official visit to Mali, Minister of Cooperation Robert Galley recalled the importance of international aid given to countries in the Sahel (Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, Chad and the Cape Verde islands, countries belonging to the Inter-State Committee to Fight the Drought in the Sahel, the CILSS).

From 1974 to 1978, international aid amounted to $8 billion. It was characterized, not only by its volume, which rose from year to year, but also by its continuity and the fact that it was well suited to the needs of the beneficiary countries.

French aid, in which the Cooperation budget plays a preponderant role, is in first place and has followed the same evolution, rising from 1,017,000,000 francs in 1975 to 1,805,000,000 francs in 1978. In 1979, Galley recalled, a special 100-million-franc program to help the Sahel nations was worked out. In addition to all this aid, emergency assistance from the Aid and Cooperation Fund was destined to meet exceptional expenditures required by the fight against famine in the Sahel countries, expenditures that amounted to 18.5 million francs in 1976, 17 million in 1977 and 25 million in 1978. For 1979, an additional 10 million francs were granted to meet the cost of transporting food to the Sahel nations.

Aid to the Sahel must continue even though rainfall has been better this year and gives hope of better harvests, Galley concluded, but the drought will be repeated and the nations in the Sahel must be helped to meet it.

French aid is essentially based on rural development and economic infrastructures. In the latter domain, the Ministry of Cooperation and the Ministry of Industry launched a program in 1975 for the development of techniques using new types of energy.

New and Renewable Energy

This program, entitled Sahel-New Energy, was followed from 1976 to 1978 and received a total credit of 32 million francs: 25 million from the Aid and Cooperation Fund (FAC), 6 million from the delegation to new types of energy and 1 million from the Solar Energy Commission (COMES).

The objectives of the program were to propose new solutions to problems resulting from the drought that had stricken the Sahel since 1973, particularly relating to irrigation and the water supply; show the countries in the Sahel the reliability and advantages of new techniques developed by French industries or research organizations in the Sahel nations themselves; take the risk of financing experimental prototypes for Sahel countries; and guarantee minimum markets for certain products in order to permit industrial-scale production while improving technical performances and a reduction in equipment costs.

While the 3-year program from 1976 to 1978 was essentially geared toward the Sahel countries, a geographical expansion and a diversification of application were provided for in the new program for 1979. The latter amounts to 13.5 million francs: 8.5 million financed by the Aid and Cooperation Fund and 5 million by COMES, a public establishment set up in 1978.

The fields of application for new types of energy are summed up below, with a few examples:

1) Solar Energy

a) Thermodynamic conversion: pumping (irrigated area in Zinder in Niger); water for villages (Bondie Sam in Senegal); refrigeration to preserve meat and fish (construction of a prototype planned for the 1979 program); multiple uses: pumping and production of electricity (Dire Solar Powerplant).

b) Photovoltaic conversion: supplying energy to a hospital (hospital in San in Mali); pumping (irrigated market garden crop area in Mauritania).

c) Direct thermic application: direct solar distillation (for an isolated village in Cape Verde).

2) Wind Energy

a) Mechanical conversion: pumping (windmills of the Savonius type, developed by the IUT [Expansion unknown] in Dakar, thanks to a 3-year financing program); dessalinization of brackish water (Cape Verde).

b) Electrical conversion: stations to measure wind potential (Mauritania, Niger, Cape Verde); supplying beacons (small islands near Mindelo in Cape Verde); production of electricity (Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania and M'Boro in Senegal).

3) Bio-energy

This is essentially a question of the extension and application of research done at the Institute of Tropical Agronomic Research in Upper Volta (development of a methane fermentation vat, gas analysis based on the different by-products of methane fermentation), as well as technical and economic studies of projects that could lead to the use of gas generators for the production of energy in rural areas, particularly near rice-growing areas (SAED [Senegal River Land Development Company] in Senegal, the Niger Office in Mali).

Most of the projects under the Sahel-New Energy program and the Renewable Energy program concerned rural development, the cornerstone of the policy followed by the Ministry of Cooperation. In addition to its humanitarian aspect, France's action in the Sahel has also aimed at greater awareness and mobilization. The interest of the different countries in these new techniques is increasingly manifested in their determination to finance themselves all or part of the projects using the new types of energy. This is the case of the Diakhao Solarelectric Powerplant (Senegal), for which SENELEC [expansion unknown] requested a loan from the CCCE [Central Fund for Economic Cooperation]. This trend could grow widespread and it is possible that in the years to come, the Aid and Cooperation Fund will no longer have to finance all projects but only assume responsibility for investment surcosts due to the use of new forms of energy.

Concrete Achievements

Within the framework of this program to develop new types of energy, the first medium-power (80 kilowatts) solar powerplant was officially placed in operation by the minister of cooperation on 24 November in Dire, a small city in Mali on the Niger, 200 kilometers south of Tombouctou and only accessible by boat for 4 months of the year. This handicap makes it impossible at certain times to get fuel and spare parts for the electric pumps. An attempt was made as early as 1919 to irrigate 3,000 hectares of wheat and following World War II, diesel motors were tried. Solar energy eliminates the limitation that caused the failure of the early attempts.

The solar powerplant in Dire makes it possible to pump 8,500 cubic meters per day from the Niger to irrigate about 100 hectares and 600 cubic meters per day to supply the area with drinking water. It will provide a small agro-tourist complex with electricity. On the world level, only laboratory facilities have greater power output.

The cost of the facility is 8.5 million French francs, which is joined with the cost of a much more vast irrigation project for the development of 3,000 hectares, which will initially include 150 hectares of irrigated wheat.

Financing for the powerplant was provided by joint grants from the Aid and Cooperation Fund and the Ministry of Industry. The grants were made to the New Energy in the Sahel operation and were spread out over 3 years.

Another example of the possibilities offered by solar energy for avoiding the problems of transporting fuel and spare parts -- in addition to noise, in this specific case -- is that of the hospital in San, an important crossroads 450 kilometers east of Bamako. It is the first hospital in the world to be supplied by solar energy. The establishment is equipped with a photovoltaic generator with a peak power of 9,800 watts, supplying 21 kilowatt-hours per day. Its cost was 1.4 million French francs, financed equally by the Ministry of Cooperation and the Solar Energy Commission.

11,464
CSO: 5000

INTER-AFRICAN AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

OPENING OF REGIONAL CENTER--The Regional Agrohydrometeorological Center of the Nations of the Sahel belonging to the Inter-State Committee To Fight the Drought in the Sahel (CILSS) was officially opened on 24 November by Gambian President El Hadj Daouda Diawara, current president of the CILSS. The purpose of the Center, located in Niamey on a 100-hectare plot of ground donated by the Niger Government, is to help countries in the Sahel improve their national meteorological and hydraulic services so as to achieve better knowledge of the climatic system, precipitation patterns and drought cycles and thereby limit climatic risks and improve agricultural yields. Set up in 1974 with the aid of the United States, France, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands and several international organizations, the Center has been in operation since 1975. The Center has already trained some 150 specialists now serving their countries. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 30 Nov 79 p 3316] 11,464

CSO: 5000

USSR

UDC 502.7

STRATEGY ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Moscow VESTNIK AKADEMII NAUK SSSR in Russian No 8, 1979 pp 84-89

[Article by Academician of the Turkmen SSR Academy of Sciences A. K. Rustamov: "Strategic Tasks of Environmental Protection. Assembly in Ashkhabad"]

[Text] The International Union for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources (IUPN) held its regular, 14th General Assembly in our country, in Ashkhabad.

The IUPN was organized in 1948, therefore its 14th General Assembly was an anniversary one: the IUPN marked its 30th anniversary. It was especially pleasant since the IUPN selected the capital of Soviet Turkmenistan as the site of work of its highest organ in this noteworthy year. The assembly took place on 25 September-5 October 1978. The decision of the IUPN to convene it in the USSR is convincing proof of the universal acknowledgement of the enormous advances of our country in the area of environmental protection and the efficient use of natural resources. This is also indicated by that fact that the 14th assembly was the most representative in the entire history of the IUPN. Delegates and observers participated in its work from almost 300 scientific and social organizations of all the continents of the world (from 60 states), as well as international organizations, UNESCO, UNEP (U.N. Programs on Environmental Protection) and the World Fund for Protection of Animate Nature (VVF).

The Soviet delegation included scientists and specialists from the USSR Academy of Sciences and the academies of sciences of the union republics, universities, agricultural and certain other higher educational institutions, the USSR Ministry of Agriculture, committees and societies of environmental protection and preserves.

Our country had strived to create all the conditions for the successful work of the assembly. The USSR Council of Ministers sent a greeting to its participants.

In opening the assembly the IUPN President D. Kyunen (Netherlands) expressed the hope that this forum will serve as a further expansion and strengthening of scientific cooperation and business contacts between the scientists of the world in the area of environmental protection. Exacerbation of interrelationships between man and nature, D. Kyunen stated, has reached such an intensity that it has become necessary to concentrate attention on working out the basic principles and positions of the global strategy of environmental protection and the efficient use of natural resources.

The discussion of the project "World Strategy of Environmental Protection" prepared by the IUPN with the financial support of UNEP and VVF occupied the central place in the assembly's work. The full text of "Strategy" includes an introductory section and two large sections: 1) strategy--primary tasks; 2) implementation of the strategy. The materials of these sections are presented in the form of recommendations covering different aspects of environmental protection and the efficient use of natural resources.

"Strategy" gives data on the fact that 40% of the tropical forests on our planet have already been destroyed; the remaining forest is being felled and burned at a rate of 20 ha per minute; 30 million km^2 (19%) of dry land is threatened by transformation into a desert; over a thousand species of vertebrates and 25,000 species of plants have been driven to the brink of extinction.

The task of "Strategy" is not to permit the further degradation of nature and to promote the preservation of all of its resources. For this purpose it was recommended that all countries adopt on the highest level commitments for environmental protection with guarantees of their fulfillment, whereupon ideally such commitments must be included in the countries' constitutions. As is known this important requirement is legislatively secured in the USSR Constitution and the constitutions of all the union republics. As for the recommendation to the government circles to support environmental protection in every way and to combine its tasks with the tasks of economic development and social progress, then this position, as was repeatedly noted at the assembly, has been realized in the Soviet Union from the first Leninist environmental protection decrees and has been reinforced by the broad program of protection and efficient use of natural resources advanced by the 25th CPSU Congress.

The requirement of "Strategy" to improve education on questions of environmental protection, in particular ecology, deserves especial attention. In this respect it is impossible not to recall the characteristic fact reported at the assembly: the special survey taken by IUPN demonstrated that of the eight proposed definitions of ecology only 29% of those surveyed selected the correct definition, 27% thought that ecology studies the possibility of controlling pollution, 11% that this is plant protection, 8% that it is protection of animals; 9% tried to give their own definition of ecology but it was incorrect, and 16% had no idea what the question was about. In "Strategy" it is indicated that it is necessary to include the subject of

environmental protection into the school programs and to introduce the teaching of ecological knowledge into the school programs on other subjects. At the same time it was stressed that the resources of mass information are obliged to constantly instill in people from an early age the feeling of responsibility for the fate of nature and its resources,and that individuals engaged in the utilization of natural resources must be in a course of modern environmental protection knowledge, and to skilfully employ it in their practical work.

"Strategy" suggests that each country and its individual regions work out its own strategy of environmental protection and make it a part of its national or regional program of economic development. Here the most vulnerable objects, places and phenomena must be isolated in relation to which the goals of environmental protection are in the most acute contradiction to the economic tasks of the use of nature. It is recommended that in each region a list be prepared of the main ecosystems and the species related to them, after evaluating the potentialities for using these objects with regard for the requirements of their protection. It was also noted that it is extremely important to evaluate the effect of economic activity on the environment; such an evaluation must become a basic and integral part of all economic planning. The role of society, and its participation in the development of a strategy and planning of environmental protection were especially indicated.

Attention was also focused on perfecting control of natural resources for which a quantitative evaluation of the potentialities of the ecosystems and a selection of the optimal paths and methods of their use are necessary. Consequently, environmental protection must be included in the planning of economic development of each country. It was recommended that the institutions that are managing environmental protection problems rapidly and effectively take measures necessary for preserving natural resources, and that the governments guarantee sufficient subsidies for these measures. It should be noted that in the USSR in the 10th Five-Year Plan 11 billion R will be spent on the goals of environmental protection, and about 55 billion R for noncentralized capital investments for repair, reconstruction and construction of purification plants and other environmental protection measures.

Finally, "Strategy" envisages the detection of the main gaps in our knowledge of environmental protection in order to develop and carry out a program to eliminate these gaps and to use research results to improve the plans and different measures for environmental protection.

"Strategy" has been called upon to assist governments, state and social organizations by joint actions to achieve greater efficiency of their efforts directed towards environmental protection; in this respect this document not only indicates the paths permitting prevention of depletion of the ecosystems, but also contains recommendations that provide for an increase in the biological productivity of natural complexes, restoration of the population of animal and plant species on the brink of extinction.

The assembly adopted the decision to start in 1979 publication of a supplement to "World Strategy of Environmental Protection" consisting of a special reference which will examine in more detail the questions of protection of natural and transformed (modified and transformed) ecosystems and species of plants and animals linked to them in the limits of the corresponding biomes, that is the landscape-geographical zones.

As the scientists who spoke at the assembly indicated the development of the "World Strategy of Environmental Protection" will as our knowledge grows be reviewed, changed, supplemented and perfected. With the introduction of its recommendations into environmental protection practice the solved tasks will gradually be excluded, and they will be replaced by new and urgent ones.

After intense discussion of the "Strategy"project it was altogether approved.

The assembly participants examined yet another document, the project "Charters of Environmental Protection." It states in concentrated form the scientific principles for man's interaction with nature, and stresses the link between the tasks of protecting the environment and providing peace and safety, ending the arms race and preventing a thermonuclear war. In the discussion of this document O. S. Kolbasov (USSR) stated that the Soviet participants of the assembly especially support those positions of the "Charter" that state that peace on earth is necessary for prevention of the degradation of the natural environment.

The Ashkhabad meeting discussed and approved a report on the work of the IUPN in the period that passed after the previous assembly. A program of activity of the IUPN for 1979-1981 was approved that was directed towards the realization of those tasks that were advanced in the "World Strategy of Environmental Protection."

In Ashkhabad in addition to the sessions of the general assembly meetings took place of the permanent commissions of the IUPN. The chairman of the commission on ecology Dzh. Ovington (Australia) related the work of the 16 regional working groups of this commission which have accumulated very valuable data on many ecosystems of the planet, especially on their anthropogenic changes. From the commission on rare and disappearing species of animals and plants whose attention is concentrated mainly on the development of scientific bases for controlling impoverishment of the flora and fauna, the eminent English zoologist P. Scott spoke; he reacted positively to the "USSR Red Book" (it was presented to each participant of the assembly). L. K. Shaposhnikov (USSR) in speaking from the commission on enlightenment dwelt on certain questions of environmental protection education and upbringing, and in particular, noted the need to train specialists of different profiles to work in the area of environmental protection. The chairman of the commission on national parks, K. Miller (United States) familiarized the assembly participants with the measures it has taken to improve the operation of these corners of our planet that are valuable in a scientific respect, the "laboratories in nature." The reports of V. Burkhenne (FRG) on the activity of the IUPN commission on

legislation in the area of the environment and of R. Bentem (Holland) on the activity of the commission for landscape planning induced a lively discussion.

At the IUPN 30th anniversary ceremony the first deputy minister of agriculture of the USSR, chairman of the organizational committee to conduct the assembly V. P. Borodin wished the IUPN new success in its noble activity and expressed the confidence that the "World Strategy of Environmental Protection" approved by the assembly will play an important role in the social-economic progress of all countries. The anniversary union was also congratulated by representatives of UNEP, UNESCO and a number of social and governmental environmental protection organizations of our country , as well as the CEMA. V. Pal'm (GDR) in speaking for the CEMA expressed the hope that the participation of the representatives of the member countries of CEMA in the Ashkhabad meeting will serve to expand its business contacts with the IUPN. The author of these lines, after congratulating the anniversary organization on its 30th anniversary thanked the delegates of the assembly for accepting as IUPN members the Environmental Protection Society of the Turkmen SSR (before this the IUPN members from the USSR were the USSR Ministry of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Society of the RSFSR), and assured them that the business cooperation of the Turkmen Environmental Protection Society with the IUPN will be developed and deepened.

At the concluding meeting of the assembly elections for the new IUPN leadership took place (for 1979-1981) that included Soviet scientists A. M. Borodin (vice-president) and Academician of VASKhNIL [V. I. Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences] V. N. Vinogradov (member of the IUPN executive committee). New Zealand was planned as the site for the 15th IUPN assembly which is to take place in 1981.

The assembly participants were able to become acquainted with the experience of the environmental protection work in the Turkmen SSR. The scales of development of arid lands, conversion of desert areas into blossoming oases with preservation of the ecological equilibrium in nature, the great artificial river, the V. I. Lenin Karakumskiy canal, and the unique Turkmen preserves made a great impression on our guests which they indicated many times in their speeches at the assembly meetings, in print, on the radio and television. The representatives of many countries, especially the developing, noted here the need for imitating the Soviet experience, combining the use of resources of arid lands with the solution of environmental tasks.

The results of the 14th IUPN General Assembly demonstrate that the Ashkhabad meeting of scientists and specialists has become a leading event in the history of this union: precisely here the first significant step was taken in developing a strategy for global environmental protection.

The Soviet scientists with their work on organizing and conducting the assembly, and active participation in its activity made yet another contribution to the general matter of the struggle for peace and environmental protection of our planet.

9035
CSO: 5000

USSR

UDC 628.51:622.51:628.33/.35

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION MEASURES AT UKRAINIAN COAL ENTERPRISES

Kiev UGOL' UKRAINY in Russian No 10, Oct 79 pp 17-18

/Article by A. A. Zolotukhin, engineer of the Stakhanovugol' Association: "Environmental Protection at Enterprises of the Stakhanovugol' Association"/

/Text/ A specialized administration, which is staffed by engineering and technical personnel and workers and has been supplied with the necessary equipment, machinery and materials, has been set up at the association for the concentration of operations on environmental protection. The concentration and specialization of operations are constantly being improved and are under the control of the management and the nature conservation service of the special staff of the association. The quality of performance of nature conservation measures is monitored by the sanitation and preventive treatment laboratory. Each year the enterprises and the association draft current and long-range plans on the protection and rational use of natural resources. The capital investments have been increased to 4.8 million rubles for the construction of new nature conservation facilities for 1979; in 1977 900,000 rubles were spent for these purposes, and in 1978--500,000 rubles.

In 1978 an inventory of water resources was made at all the enterprises. At present 24 complexes of mine water treatment structures are in operation at the association, including 20 horizontal sedimentation tanks (a total capacity of 18,700 m^3) with chlorinators, 22 clarification ponds (713,000 m^3), 20 silt areas (50,000 m^3), more than 19 km of collector drains and about 500 man holes. The catchment basins of shaft drains (68,000 m^3) have been cleaned, 2 silt areas have been built and 3 have been cleaned (10,000 m^3), 2.5 km of collector drains, 55 man holes, 6 dams of clarification ponds and silt areas, 15 horizontal sedimentation tanks and chlorinators have been repaired. The horizontal sedimentation tanks at the Zamkovskaya, Krasnopol'yevskaya, Lomovatskaya, Krinichanskaya and Luganskaya mines were renovated, which made it possible to increase the efficiency of their operation by 25 percent.

At the two motor columns of the service station of the association waste water treatment facilities are in operation, enclosed truck and passenger car washes with the use of recirculated water have been put into operation,

the collection of spent lubricants in special tanks with subsequent recovery has been organized. Surface mine water treatment stations for the purpose of dust elimination are operating at the Mine imeni Chesnokov, the Maksimovskaya Mine, the Mine imeni Dzerzhinskiy and the Mine imeni Kirov, in 1978 such a station was put into operation at the Krasnopol'yevskaya Mine. This made it possible to reduce the consumption of drinking water for production needs. Mine water treatment units like the Don are used at the Mine imeni Il'ich, the Mine imeni XXII s"yezda KPSS, the Golubovskaya and Luganskaya mines. Start-up and adjustment work on the horizontal sedimentation tanks and the Don unit is being performed at the Vergelevskaya Mine, operation will begin in 1979. At the enterprises of the association the recording of water consumption and water discharge has been introduced and strict accountability has been established. The performance of the indicated measures made it possible to reduce the amount of polluted effluents being discharged into open watercourses by 6.9 million m^3 as compared with their amount in 1977, to save more than 3 million m^3 of drinking water as a result of the reuse of purified mine water and to halt the pollution of watercourses with petroleum products.

Rock dumps, boiler units, rail and motor transport are the main sources of air pollution at the enterprises of the association. We have registered and certified 83 dumps, of them 45 are burning dumps. In 1978 work was performed on extinguishing 10 dumps, at the Mine imeni Chesnokov 3 waste piles and a flat rock dump were extinguished, the covering of it with a plant cover is being completed. Of the 35 dumps in operation 10 are flat, at which preventive operations on averting the self-combustion of the rock are being carried out. Along with the landscaping of the dumps and the adjacent areas in 1978 2 hectares of arable land were restored with a plan of 0.5 hectare. The construction of the Stakhanovskiy and Kirovskiy flat group rock dumps, the sites of which are within centers of population, is continuing, their placement into operation is planned in 1979-1980. The use of group dumps will make it possible to reduce the number of operating burning dumps and to expand the front of work on extinguishing them.

In 1978 the operation of a new industrial boiler house with dust catchers began at the Luganskaya Mine. Battery dust extractors have been installed on 28 of the 35 DKVR boilers, which is making it possible to reduce by 10 percent the discharges of harmful substances into the air. At the service station of the association the construction of a set of equipment for the diagnosis of motor transport was continued, the monitoring of the complete combustion of fuel when the transport leaves for the line has been stepped up. This will make it possible to reduce considerably the amounts of harmful substances being liberated with the exhaust. The mine rail transport has been converted from steam to diesel propulsion, which is promoting a decrease of harmful discharges into the air.

At the association organizational and technical measures have been drawn up on the further improvement of nature conservation work for the next few years, including the construction and placement into operation of a

clarification pond, a mechanical treatment station and a biological treatment station for the municipal and household sewage at the Mine imeni XXII s"yezda, a clarification pond at the Mine imeni Il'ich, as well as a mine water treatment station at the Annenskaya Mine (Figure 1 /not reproduced/). The performance of these measures will make it possible to expand the work on enviromental protection and to improve its condition.

7807
CSO: 5000

ITALY

SENATE APPROVES 'MERLI' WATER POLLUTION LAW

Milan CORRIERE DELLA SERA in Italian 22 Dec 79 pp 11

[Article by Antonio Cederna: "The 'New Merli' Must Now Be Implemented"]

[Text] Rome. It is finally done. We have a law which, if the spirit of initiative, political will, and functional capacity of the state, regions, provinces, and communes are not lacking, will enable us to combat pollution of the waters--surface and underground, inland and sea, public and private.

It was approved the day before yesterday by the Senate, adopting the text that the Chamber, accepting many proposals from the left, had approved on the 29 November last. Sent back to the Chamber for some technical changes introduced by the Senate with regard to financing, the law was immediately ratified definitively by the public works committee. It makes notable improvements both in the Merli law of 1976 and in the original bill. The main ones are the following:

The famous List C, relating to pollutants discharged by industries into water courses and public sewers, is reinstated, in that the maximum permissible quantities are set forth in absolute values (per liter of water) and not, as the government initially desired, in percentages, that is, independently of the total quantity of waste, whereby the largest polluters would be rewarded, encouraging the intake of inadmissible quantities of toxic substances into the waters.

A new type of control over industrial waste is introduced. While the Merli law prescribed that samples be taken over a 3-hour time period and that all samplings then be averaged, now instantaneous samplings are planned and surprise checkups are now provided for. In this way the tricks that businesses often use, such as that of shutting off the discharge of waste or reducing the production process to a minimum in order to make foul waste water appear clean in a few minutes, are prevented.

While agricultural activities, even the biggest polluters (such as the big hog farmers) used to be exempted from obligations under the law, a refinement is now made: it will be up to the interministerial committee responsible for state functions to establish which agricultural enterprises are obliged to make provision for purification work.

Ad hoc funding is provided for all the purification work, filling one of the most conspicuous gaps of the Merli law. In addition to the loans of 2,000 billion [lire] granted by the deposits and loans bank to communes, associations of communes, and mountain communities for sewers and purification systems, financing in the amount of 500 billion is being provided over a period of 3 years to the regions, which in turn disburse to communes, associations of communes, and provinces. For the industries, in addition to the ordinary financing, a sum of 350 billion is available (including 100 for agricultural enterprises), and the regions will be the ones to decide, based on the reclamation programs that each industry must submit within 2 months of the approval of the law (a program which, if approved by the region, may suspend the penal process for a polluter).

Very short time limits are provided for regional implementation: by 31 March 1980 the regions must submit "an initial program" for reclamation containing "objectives" and "priorities" for the work to be accomplished. On the other hand industries are given a maximum period of 18 months, until 1 September 1981, to comply.

There are other new features on the judicial level. Exceeding the specified limits, which heretofore was not a misdemeanor but only an aggravation in the case of unauthorized discharge, is now considered a specific misdemeanor. Moreover, every citizen can be a monitor and report both the industries that violate the set limits and the public administrations that fail to comply. Among the negative elements of the law, there is what has been called "exemption based on expectation," that is, the fact that the communes can grant exemptions from List C to industries that discharge waste into public sewers even if the final purification system is not set up and there is only the vague presumption that it will be installed.

Credit for the positive aspects of the law also goes to the associations "Italia Nostra," "World Nature Fund," and "Friends of the Earth", which have disseminated appeals, organized press conferences, and carried out effective work of persuasion among the politicians. The law contains the financial resources, the structures, and the controls necessary to make Italian waters less toxic. Now, comments magistrate Gianfranco Amendola, there are no longer any alibis for the inertia of the public administrators.

7428
CSO: 5000

END